



Leading learning and skills

# Information, Advice and Guidance Strategic Board Papers

Paper Two:  
Supporting the Entitlement  
to Level 2 Provision

## January 2006

Of interest to members of local IAG Strategic Boards



This is one of a series of themed papers designed to support Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Strategic Board members. We hope that the ideas here will be used as a focus for discussion in Strategic Board meetings and to support the development of effective IAG strategies in local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) areas.

This second paper focuses on how members of IAG Strategic Boards and wider IAG community can work together to support individuals in accessing Level 2 learning provision and draws on the experience of trial areas in the North East and South East Regions.

Local LSCs should use the content of this publication to inform discussion and debate at local Strategic Board meetings on Information, Advice and Guidance.

## 🎯 For action

Local Strategic Boards for IAG should use the content of this paper to help shape local delivery of the Level 2 Entitlement locally in line with the LSC business planning process.

# Background

The Skills Strategy White Paper (*21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential 2003*) reaffirms the commitment to help unskilled or low-skilled adults to gain a platform of employability skills on which they can build for the future.

To achieve this, a package of support focused on providing learning for adults who do not already have a **first full** Level 2 qualification has been developed (that is, do not have 5 GCSEs at grades A\* - C, an NVQ at Level 2 or an equivalent qualification). The elements of this package of support make up the Individual Offer.

The Individual Offer is designed support achievement of the Level 2 target of reducing by at least 40 per cent the number of adults in the workforce who lack NVQ2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010 and one million to achieve Level 2 between 2003 and 2006.

This booklet focuses on how Information and Advice services can support individuals in accessing their entitlement to the Level 2 Entitlement (L2E) offer. Further information on other aspects of the Individual Offer can be obtained from your local LSC but this is summarised briefly opposite.

## The Individual Offer

### Level 2 Entitlement (L2E)

An entitlement to fee remission for tuition to study for a **first full** Level 2 qualification, or in some cases a Level 3 qualification for eligible adults of 19 years and over (no upper age limit).

### Information and Advice (IA)

A free one-to-one session focusing on the needs of low-skilled adults.

### Learner Support Funds

Discretionary use of these funds to help with the additional costs of learning, for example, registration and exam fees.

### Adult Learning Grant (ALG)

A means-tested weekly grant for those studying full time for a **first full** Level 2 qualification for adults of any age (from 19 years), and for a first Level 3 for those aged 19 to 30.

### Train to Gain (or Employer Training Pilot up to March 2006)

A programme of brokered access to training for employed adults including free tuition leading to a **first full** Level 2 or Skills for Life qualification accessed through their employer, plus support for employers.



## Eligibility for L2E in brief

Any adult of 19 years and over (no upper age limit) wishing to study for their **first full** Level 2 qualification is entitled to have their tuition fees remitted.

The first Level 2 qualifications approved for fee remission under L2E have been agreed by DfES, LSC and QCA and can be found on the Learning Aims Database (LAD) available at <http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/lad/>

Only learning providers funded by the LSC through the further education (FE) funding stream may offer fee remission for tuition for full Level 2 qualifications in 2005/06. A list of these providers in each area can be obtained from local LSCs – details of which can be found at [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

Eligible adults are entitled to free tuition to study for a **first full** Level 2 qualification regardless of their employment status (eligible adults on means-tested benefit will already be entitled to free tuition). However, tuition fees for any linked qualifications such as first aid, food hygiene and health and safety are not included in the entitlement.

The entitlement is to tuition fees only. At the discretion of the local LSC learning providers have the flexibility to use their Learner Support Funds to cover other costs of learning, such as exam and registration fees. In certain circumstances learners may be entitled to study for a Level 3 qualification and advice should be sought by providers from the local LSC.

Further details of eligibility criteria for individuals and eligible course provision can be found in *LSC Level 2 Entitlement – Guide for Providers, Stakeholders and Intermediaries* May 2005 available on the LSC website [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

## Information and Advice services and the L2E

Adults can find out more about the Level 2 Entitlement and if they are eligible through:

- local information and advice providers, including **nextstep** providers (for adults aged 20 plus with no upper age limit)
- **learndirect** advice line
- applying directly to the learning provider (for example, a local FE college) of their choice
- their employer, if the employer is participating in Train to Gain (or Employer Training Pilot up to March 2006).

### The one-to-one IA session

Any adult aged 20-plus (with no upper age limit) without a full Level 2 qualification, is entitled to a free one-to-one advice session with a qualified member of staff from an LSC-approved IA provider. The purpose of the session is to help them make an informed choice about their options, taking into account their current level of qualification, personal circumstances and regional and local skill priorities.

Some adults may already be clear about the qualification they wish to study and with which learning provider, so an IA session is not mandatory in order to access the L2E. However, it is highly recommended, to ensure the client is clear about their choice in order to provide confirmation of this decision. Adults also need to be advised by an IA provider, learning provider or **learndirect** about their eligibility and have their commitment to completing their learning and achievement explained to them as part of this process. It is a requirement that all IA providers delivering the **nextstep** service track learner progress by ensuring that referral destinations are recorded and followed up.

## The role of **learndirect** advice and the L2E

A caller to the **learndirect** advice service who is interested in L2E and has a clear idea of their course and learning provider is given details of the provider of their choice.

A caller who requires further support to choose their course is transferred to the local IA service who then arranges an appointment for the individual to discuss their options.

## The experience of the L2E North East

In the North East a Regional Steering group was established that brought together LSC staff responsible for the L2E, Adult Learning Grant and further education colleges. The group was chaired by the Regional Director. The participants felt the value of coordinating the different aspects of the Individual Offer and initially met weekly before continuing to meet regularly throughout the trial. The involvement of senior managers helped to establish its importance.

An integrated marketing campaign 'Need time and money to learn?' was developed to support the L2E, the Adult Learning Grant and Employer Training Pilot. This included how to access IAG support in the region. National marketing materials were included in the regional campaign. Customers were given the choice of whether to approach **nextstep** or to contact colleges direct. Although time was very tight, the intention was to synchronise marketing with college enrolments. The campaign included merchandising, radio and some paper advertising as well as working with partners and stakeholders to raise awareness.

A single regional telephone number was established and this was run by the LSC who captured data and referred people on to an appropriate provider.

LSC Tyne and Wear undertook an audit to identify where IAG provision was. This was further developed using data from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to identify the top 15 wards in their area for people without a Level 2. Provision was then targeted to these areas.

Going to 'where people are at' was seen as key and prompted valuable work with, for example the Probation Service. A series of awareness raising events were also held between Sure Start and Children's Centres and **nextstep** in the region under the umbrella of Campaign for Learning.

Emphasis was also placed on trying to ensure that IA providers had a good understanding of who was eligible for L2E and which provision fulfilled the requirement for a full Level 2 qualification.

Meetings were held with **nextstep** providers to raise awareness of Level 2 eligibility of individuals and course provision. On reflection, one North East colleague suggested that joint FE and **nextstep** meetings would also have been valuable. Ensuring good knowledge of eligibility and provision is seen as an important element of IAG contract management.

Development of **nextstep** services to support L2E was seen as part of the overall development of **nextstep** services and contributed to improvements in performance for seeing clients below Level 2.

Attempts were made to streamline administration with a single form for the customer to complete at each stage of the process. This proved problematic as the form did not capture all the data needed by **nextstep** and for college enrolment. The pilot reverted to completion of the national form for declaration of below Level 2 qualifications and IAG providers and colleges reverted to their own forms. In future it is possible that a regional form might be developed in the North East.

An important area for development is to build better information on referrals and tracking of customers referred from next step and other IA providers. Getting colleges to feedback on outcomes of referrals was often 'patchy' and this made it difficult in some instances for IA providers to measure the effectiveness of work they were doing with customers below Level 2.

Capturing data on those who accessed provision through the Level 2 Entitlement is also an area for improvement. It is often difficult to assess from a student's Individual Learning Record (ILR) if someone is accessing their *first* Level 2 qualification and the ILR does not necessarily differentiate between Level 2 Entitlement and other reasons for fee remission. Benchmarking would have helped to measure progress more effectively.

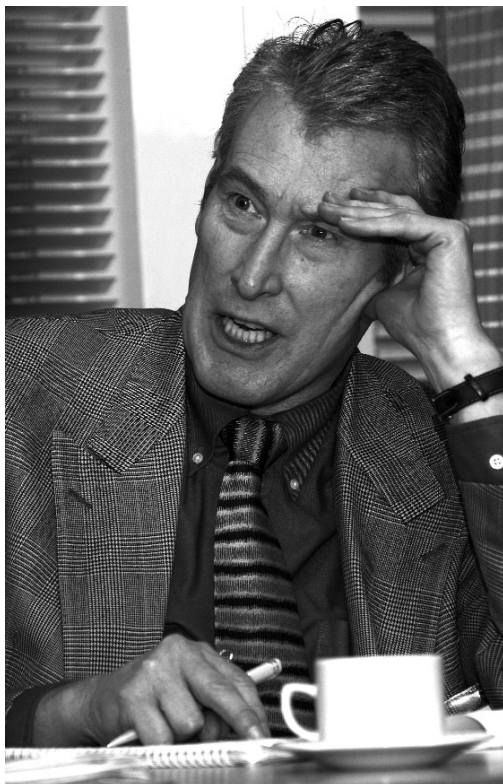
Nevertheless the North East Region has seen an 18 per cent increase in adult learners on full Level 2 programmes from 2003/4 to 2004/5 and at least 37 per cent of these are studying for a *first* full Level 2 qualification although the real figure may be higher than this.

## Suggestions/good ideas for planning the IAG contribution to Level 2 in their area

- Ensure LSC staff responsible for managing all aspects of the Individual Offer, including IAG, are working closely together and meeting regularly to dovetail services, marketing, training and work with partners.
- Synchronise marketing campaigns with national and regional campaigns and college enrolments to include access to IA provision as one route to the L2E. Plan early to give good lead-in times for materials and events.
- Include specific actions for supporting L2E in the IAG Strategic Board Plan and in **nextstep** Business Plans. For example, the promotion of L2E, collaboration with FE, referral and tracking.
- Plan for training to build good awareness of *all* IA staff, service managers and advisors, of eligibility criteria for individuals and what constitutes eligible full Level 2 provision. One suggestion is to produce a simple local guide to eligibility and provision for IA advisors.
- Work with local FE colleges to ensure IA advisors are aware of the Level 2 and Level 3 courses on offer and encourage FE colleges to keep their entries on the National Learning Directory up to date.
- Provide feedback to colleges and other providers about the type of learning individuals eligible for the Level 2 offer are seeking to aid planning.
- Use what we know about types of learners to be able to tailor provision of IA and learning to better meet the needs of those individuals.
- Review how IA advisors, **nextstep** and other IA providers, access up-to-date information on learning provision and how they can identify full Level 2 provision.
- Plan locally how **learndirect** advice will work with IA providers and learning providers to continuously improve information on learning provision including how they might 'flag' provision that is eligible for L2E.
- Work with FE colleges, adult and community learning providers to identify groups of learners on 'First Step' provision who might be eligible for the Level 2 offer and agree how IAG might be made readily available.
- Work with colleges and IA providers to build good referral routes and make arrangements to track progression into Level 2 provision. Include evaluation of the routes and support that customers found most useful in helping them to access provision.



- Use research and local demographic information, for example from Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk) to map where individuals without Level 2 qualifications live and use this information to plan for IA services.
- Review information and advice provision to ensure services are reaching potential customers. Make good use of organisations who traditionally work with people with below Level 2, for example, Sure Start, and bring on board new providers where needed.
- Ask IAG providers to provide a monthly case study on someone who has moved from IAG into Level 2 learning.
- Trial the development of any joint systems, processes or forms before launching across the local area or region to ensure the management information needs of each provider are met at every stage.



## Key questions for IAG Boards to debate and agree actions in their local areas

- How much do we know about the local target population we are trying to attract into Level 2 provision? Who has this information and how can we share this effectively?
- Are we confident that we are working effectively with organisations who are working with these below Level 2 learners and what actions do we need to take to review this?
- Is IAG, including **nextstep**, fully integrated into planning for, and marketing of, Level 2 provision?
- How can we make sure that national, regional, local and provider marketing campaigns are synchronised across all aspects of the Individual Offer and in line with peak college enrolment dates?
- What awareness raising and training do we need to put in place to make sure IAG providers really understand eligibility for L2E and its relationship to other aspects of the Individual Offer?
- What actions do we need to take to ensure that IAG providers have a good knowledge of full Level 2 provision in the area and are able to identify this when looking at different courses?
- What is the role of IAG providers and **nextstep** in promoting Level 2 learning and encouraging participation? Have the 'hearts and minds' of IAG advisors been won?
- What should IAG Board members be doing to work collaboratively on meeting the entitlement? What is the contribution of other partners to meeting the L2E?
- How do colleges currently gather data on prior attainment and can we record those accessing the L2E more effectively to differentiate between this and the types of fee remission?
- Are there improvements to be made in arrangements between colleges and **nextstep** on referrals and tracking of customers below Level 2 and what actions do we need to take?

*LSC Level 2 Entitlement – Guide  
for Providers, Stakeholders and  
Intermediaries May 2005*  
available on the LSC website  
[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

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